

Touhou: Story of West Coast Wonderland

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/46534792) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/46534792>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Touhou Project
Characters:	Hakurei Reimu , Kirisame Marisa , Izayoi Sakuya , Flandre Scarlet , Remilia Scarlet , Fujiwara no Mokou , Houraisan Kaguya , Mystia Lorelei
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Modern Setting , Slice of Life
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-04-16 Updated: 2023-08-05 Words: 3,336 Chapters: 5/?

Touhou: Story of West Coast Wonderland

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Summary

A look into the lives of the residents of the sleepy Los Angeles suburb known as Gensokyo.

21st-century Shrine Maiden

Reimu sighed, clutching her broom and staring idly out over the courtyard. She was done her sweeping for the afternoon, and with nobody around, she had a bit of time to herself.

The shrine had been very quiet today, with only a few elderly couples coming to pay their respects. Though upon further reflection, a day like this wasn't really all that out of the ordinary. Reimu sometimes wondered what her grandparents had been thinking, crossing the Pacific to start a new branch of the Hakurei shrine in the sleepy Los Angeles suburb that was Gensokyo.

Well... to be fair, Reimu knew that at the time, Gensokyo had been made up almost entirely of Japanese immigrants. At present, the town still boasted the highest proportion of Japanese residents in the entire country, but that along with its strong Japanese cultural identity had been steadily diluted over the years. Logically, this had the unfortunate effect of sharply decreasing the shrine's clientele.

At least we still have the honor of being the only shrine in the county, thought Reimu wryly.

She turned and began walking back to the shed at the north end of the shrine grounds, where she left her stuff at the beginning of each day. It was almost closing time now, and Reimu could feel the afternoon breeze on her bare shoulders as she strolled across the courtyard. Hakurei garb differed from most traditional miko attire in that way. For what reason, Reimu had no idea.

Once inside the shed, she changed out of said clothes, slipping back into a comfortable hoodie and jeans, then grabbed her belongings and locked the door before heading back to her car for the drive home.

Reimu drove a 1999 Ford Focus that she affectionately called her "piece of junk." She'd already had to get the transmission replaced, not that she knew a great deal about that kind of thing. Nitori's uncle had been the one to fix it for her. Getting a new car would be nice, but well, that was the issue with being born into a traditional miko's family. With the untimely passing of her mother, the duty had fallen to her because both her siblings were male, and the job salary consisted of what her father could spare her after having to spend most of his income on the shrine upkeep. It wasn't like she starved, and she still had enough cash for a couple beers a day, but when it came down to it Reimu knew she wouldn't be getting a Tesla anytime soon.

She briefly entertained stopping by the local Burger King on her way home. Cooking tonight sounded tiring, and maybe she could see her old coworkers, having worked there all throughout high school. In all honesty, flipping burgers in the back of that place may have been more mentally stimulating than most of her days at the shrine. The pay was probably comparable too.

Reimu sighed as she pulled onto the freeway. Probably shouldn't, she thought. I told myself I would stop eating out so much.

Hopefully she still had a forty in the pantry somewhere.

Ordinary Chemistry Major

"hey i need a favor. meet me at the dons by your place", was all Marisa's text had said. Reimu sighed once again as she pulled into the McDonald's parking lot.

I seem to be doing that a lot lately, she thought to herself. Now to see what Marisa's gotten into this time.

Marisa, true to form, had gone ahead and ordered without her, so Reimu, still trying to avoid eating out too much, just went over and sat down.

"Alright, what is it?" she asked bluntly, shamelessly stealing a fry from Marisa's Big Mac meal. Marisa didn't respond immediately, instead looking to her left, then to her right, and then behind her to make sure nobody was listening. Reimu suppressed the urge to roll her eyes.

"Okay, here's the deal," Marisa said in a hushed tone, leaning forward over the table. "Remember last week when I blew up my garage lab?"

Reimu, unable to resist any longer, let loose with an emphatic eye roll. "Yes. Of course. How could I possibly forget something like that? Didn't your landlord kick you out?"

"That's happening later today, which is why I need to ask for a favor," replied Marisa. "Alice said she'll let me sleep on her couch until I can find a new place, but in the meantime I need somewhere to store all my, uh, y'know..."

"Your highly illegal firework chemicals that you've somehow avoided getting busted for," Reimu finished. "Let me guess, you want me to keep them at the shrine."

"Yes." Marisa clasped her hands. "You know me too well. That would be perfect. Would you do that for me?"

Reimu snorted. "This sounds like an absolutely terrible idea. You want me to keep all those textbooks you've stolen from the university library too?"

"Nah, Alice said those were fine. She just doesn't want, y'know, toxic chemicals in her living room is all."

"For the love of..." Reimu shook her head and glared at Marisa across the table, swiping another handful of fries as she did so. "Okay, *if* this was to happen, aside from dying of poisonous fumes, can you actually guarantee me I won't get into any legal trouble? No suspicious landlord? Outstanding debts to chemical dealers?"

Marisa crossed her arms. "C'mon, Reimu. You really think I haven't covered all my bases with this? I know what I'm doing."

"Mmm yeah," grunted the miko. "Somehow that does very little to reassure me."

"Look," Marisa insisted. "I've had plenty of close shaves, true, but you said it yourself. When have I actually ever gotten busted? My track record is pretty good in that regard, all things considered. How about... for next New Year's at your shrine I'll make you guys some custom rockets for your fireworks show too. Whatever you want, I'll make it happen."

"I think I'd have a higher chance of taking you up on this without that extra offer," said Reimu, rolling her eyes again. She sighed deeply and rubbed her face. "I mean, when it comes down to it we both know I wasn't going to say no anyway..."

Marisa leaned forward, waiting expectantly.

"Alright, two conditions," said Reimu, holding up fingers. "Number one, you're getting me a twenty piece nuggets right now. Number two, my dad is never finding out about this. Ever."

"Well, you know I've got experience with hiding stuff from fathers," Marisa smirked. "Again, no need to worry, we can get this done today easy. C'mon, I'll grab your nuggs and we can get going."

They stood up from their seats and headed towards the counter. "Remind me just how many of these chemicals of yours are toxic or explosive again?" Reimu asked.

"Like all of them?" Marisa grinned. "Y'know, this is the one time I'm glad you actually work at that shrine. You're constantly broke, but at least it means I can hide banned chemicals on your family lands."

Reimu groaned. "Why I put up with you, I'll never know."

Perfect, Elegant, Part-Time Maid

Apron, check. Gloves, check. Frilly headband, check. Sakuya bent down, pulled a Swiffer duster from her backpack, and got to work.

She was back at the Scarlet mansion today, which was massive and a pain to clean. Remilia's dad was loaded like that. Sakuya couldn't complain though, since not only had he been her first client, he also paid her very handsomely for her services.

In fact, this whole maid gig had started with him. The family had needed someone to help upkeep the mansion, but with Mr. Scarlet being Mr. Scarlet, he hadn't wanted to use some cleaning service he wasn't familiar with.

"C'mon," Sakuya remembered Remi saying back then. "You might as well get out of your family's shop more. Father already knows you and you babysit Flandre like every other week. What's wrong with a bit of dusting?"

She had been hesitant at first, but then Remilia had mentioned how much her dad would pay, and that had made it a no-brainer. Then for whatever reason, she had found she really liked it, and the whole maid business thing had spiraled from there. Obviously, it had been Remilia who had convinced her to wear the silly headband. "It'll make you stand out," she had said.

Sakuya hated to admit it, but Remi had been right. There was a decent number of people around town who now knew her as "that French maid girl", which was a bit strange to say the least, but it did mean she got a ton of brand recognition, and business with it.

Back to today's job: she had been tasked with cleaning the guest rooms. Each had tables, a dresser and a fireplace mantle to dust, and she needed to check the fireplaces themselves for ashes that might have to be emptied. The floor needed to be swept and mopped as well, and bedsheets laundered. Better get to it.

Sometimes Sakuya liked to put her earphones in and listen to music as she worked, but that always seemed out of place in the old, Victorian architecture of the Scarlet mansion, especially considering her preference for edgy rock. Here it seemed more fitting just to work in silence, not that Sakuya minded too much.

Time passed fairly quickly, and she had finished two rooms and was just about to move on to the third when she heard loud thumping sounds from down the hall. Puzzled, she walked outside to take a look, and was almost bowled over by none other than Flandre, who seemed to have been running over from the mansion's west wing.

"Sakuyaaaa!" she shouted, hugging Sakuya tightly. "Remi told me you'd be here today! Play with me, won'tcha?"

"What... are you doing here, Flandre?" Sakuya asked, quickly regaining her composure. "Aren't you supposed to be at school right now?" She checked her phone. "It's two o'clock on a Thursday."

“I got suspended again yesterday,” Flandre pouted. “I don’t think the principal likes me very much.”

Sakuya sighed. “Do I even want to ask? Was it for beating up a classmate again? Flandre, you should know by now that your school doesn’t like when you play so rough. It’s also not dignified for someone like you.”

“Not dignified, blah blah blah,” Flandre parroted. “You say that every time. C’mon, I was playing on my computer this morning but now I’m bored. Come downstairs with me and we can play darts again or something!”

“Flandre, I’m cleaning right now and can’t play,” Sakuya insisted. “Where’s your mother? Is she home?”

“She’s on some fancy business trip with Father,” said Flandre, sticking out her tongue. “That’s why no one else is here. Play with me Sakuya, I’m bored, bored, bored!” She grabbed the maid’s wrist and started tugging as hard as she could. Sakuya winced. Despite her previous babysitting experience with Flan, the kid’s strength still always surprised her.

This is fun, she thought. Still another three rooms to clean and now I have to deal with this gremlin as well.

She pulled her hand free from Flandre’s grip, bent down, and scooped her up in a princess carry, eliciting loud protesting from the fourth grader.

“Alright Flandre,” she said calmly, turning and heading in the direction of the stairs down to Flandre’s basement suite. “I’ll make you a deal. We’ll play a round of darts, and if I win then you let me finish cleaning, alright?”

Flandre squirmed in Sakuya’s arms, but thankfully wasn’t in a fist-swinging mood today. “That’s not a fair deal!” she complained. “You’re way better than me and you’ll win for sure!”

“Life lesson number one, Flandre,” Sakuya instructed as she reached the stairs and began descending, unruly Scarlet still in tow. “Most deals aren’t fair. You might as well get used to that now.”

DMV Charisma Break

Remilia hung up her lab coat, grabbed her bag, and stalked out of the medical building in a foul mood. They'd been ahead of schedule for the past couple weeks, which would have given her extra time to write her research paper at the end of the semester, but no... whoever it was over at the hospital hadn't properly frozen the blood samples that had come in today, which meant the entire afternoon's worth of prep had gone to waste. Now they'd probably have to wait another week before the lab got more suitable samples and they could try again. At least her supervisor was just as miffed as she was.

She scanned the parking lot, looking for her ride, but just as always seemed to happen, Sakuya pulled up to the curb right then.

"Hop in, boss," quipped her silver-haired friend, pulling down her sunglasses and winking at Remilia through the drivers' side window.

Despite the bad mood she was in, Remilia couldn't help but crack a smile. "I'll never understand how you always manage to show up exactly when I want you."

"I can stop time, obviously," deadpanned Sakuya as Remilia climbed into the passenger seat. "We're going to Patchy's, right?"

"Yeah." Remilia yawned, making a show of stretching her arms and legs as Sakuya pulled out of the parking lot. "What a day. I'm completely beat. Sure am glad that I bought us this car, 'cause the old Civic definitely wasn't cutting it. Those seats had absolutely no cushioning."

Sakuya snorted. "Do you have *any* idea how entitled that sounded? Also, you only paid for 75 percent of it. Half my savings went towards the rest."

"Hey, you can't argue that it wasn't a good investment," Remilia laughed, ignoring Sakuya's first comment. "Let's be real, you complained more about the Civic than I did. And a Lexus suits you perfectly, don't you think?"

"The only reason I complained a lot about the Civic was because the power steering was completely busted," pointed out Sakuya. "Look don't get me wrong, I'm obviously super thankful for you pretty much getting me a new car, but I'll remind you this whole situation wouldn't even exist if you weren't somehow the least competent driver on the planet. How is it even possible to get eight demerits within three months?"

"Yeah, well... speed limits should be abolished, as long as you aren't hitting anyone," Remilia sulked. Thinking about her suspended license was putting her in a bad mood again. "The DMV can go as well."

Sakuya would have responded with something witty, but glanced over at Remilia's face and decided to be nice and drop the subject. "Rough day in the lab?" she asked instead.

“You don’t know the half of it,” Remilia grumbled. “I’m sure Patchy is going to ask about it too when we get to her place, so I’ll spare you the details now, but let’s just say the blood donor center needs to hire some lab techs who actually know what they’re doing.”

“That doesn’t sound good,” said Sakuya, making the left turn into Patchouli’s neighborhood. “Is tonight going to turn into another Remilia Scarlet vent session?”

“Pretty decent chance I’d say,” replied Remilia, rolling her eyes. “I’ve got another Flandre story from last night to share too.”

Sakuya laughed as she pulled up to the curb beside Patchy’s house. “Guess being rich can’t solve all the world’s problems, eh?”

A NEET Goes for Yakitori

“Hey, loser.”

Mokou didn’t even look up, continuing to scrape away at her teppan. “You’re early,” she responded. “What is it, only ten past nine?”

“I’ve been bored today,” replied Kaguya, setting her shoulder bag down on a vacant bar stool. “What, you don’t want me watching you cleaning or something?”

“Who would?” Mokou deadpanned. She reached for a nearby spray bottle and gave her cooktop a few good squirts, wiping it down with a damp rag. “Anything new with you? Did you leave your basement this week until today?”

“Oh, come up with a new joke already,” Kaguya shot back. She leaned forward to take a swat at Mokou, which was easily ducked under. “You’ve been over to my place how many times? The basement’s disgusting. I’ll rent it out to you if you’re that interested though.”

Mokou finally looked up, smirking and wiping the sweat off her brow. “I’m good. You’re dodging the question though. How many other times did you leave your house this week?”

“Do you have to ask that every time?” Kaguya rolled her eyes. “I, uh... well, I went and got groceries on Tuesday. Aside from that...”

“You stayed inside and played Tetris all week. Got it,” Mokou snickered as she turned and headed for the back kitchen, where she had stashed away a plate of yakitori for them like usual. “Instant noodles and a twelve-pack don’t count as groceries, by the way,” she called back over her shoulder.

“There wasn’t any beer this week,” Kaguya yelled after her. “Eirin’s been telling me to cut down on my drinking.”

She sat back and waited for Mokou to come back with the food. The restaurant was quiet, with it being after closing time and all the customers having already left. Mystia, one of the prep cooks, was roaming around mopping the floor, and Kaguya exchanged a nod with her, the two having become acquainted from all of her previous after-hours visits.

Much as Kaguya hated to admit it, Mokou really did know her too well. She really didn’t get out much aside from these late-night drop-ins to the teppanyaki lounge, so it was definitely good for her that Mokou had a stake in the place and had this open invitation going. Not that Kaguya would ever say that to Mokou’s face. That would ruin their whole relationship dynamic.

Mokou promptly returned with the chicken, still warm, and a couple cans of Yebisu. The two cracked open their drinks and toasted, as always, before taking long swigs.

“So what all has my favorite NEET been getting up to?” Mokou grinned, sitting down and snatching a skewer from the plate. “Didn’t ’cha say last week you had some big project going on with that one crypto group or something?”

Kaguya snorted between bites of meat. “Yeah, that was a thing. I’m glad it’s over with. You know, I’m honestly thinking of just finding a more traditional programming job. Doing freelance for these crypto startups pays really well, but sometimes I swear they’re all run by teenagers.”

Mokou nodded, cocking an eyebrow. “Yeah. Might help to have something you can actually put on your resume for once, eh?”

“Well...” Kaguya crossed her arms, grinning back. “Either way, I’d say it’s better than grilling chicken for a living.”

Such were how most conversations went between Mokou and Kaguya. Their friendship was expressed in jabs and snark, and they had both gotten way too good at it. Tonight though, they were interrupted after a few minutes by Mystia on her way out.

“Night Mokou! You’ll lock up tonight, yeah?”

“Yeah I got it,” Mokou responded, waving. “G’night Misty.”

Mystia gave a jaunty salute before heading out the front door, bells chiming as it swung shut behind her.

“She’s a funny one, huh?” Kaguya observed. “Has she been here since you guys opened?”

“Mm,” Mokou replied as she tipped back the remainder of her beer. “One of the other chefs knew her from before. Apparently she worked at his last restaurant since she was in high school. Not the brightest, if I’m gonna be honest, but she works hard and she’s good at what she does, so I ain’t complaining.”

Kaguya scoffed. “That must be nice, having good coworkers. I’ve mentioned how incompetent the average programmer is, right?”

“Something like that.” Mokou untied her headband and gave her head a shake, hair spilling out around her shoulders. “On that note, did you wanna stick around here longer or head to your place? I’m feeling pretty beat.”

“I didn’t offer, but alright, just invite yourself over,” replied Kaguya, rolling her eyes but smiling. “It should be fine though. I think Reisen’s on night shift tonight.”

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